DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 164 692 UD 018 954

AUTHOR Campos, Ricardo; Flores, Juan
TITLE National Culture and Migration: Perspectives from the Puerto Rican Working Class. Centro Working Papers No. 1.
INSTITUTION City Univ. of New York, N.Y. Centro de Estudios Pertorriguenos.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 61p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Colonialism; *Migration; Nationalism; *Political Attitudes; *Puerto Rican Culture; *Puerto Ricans; Self Concept; Social Class; Social Differences; *Social History
IDENTIFIERS *Puerto Rico

ABSTRACT

In this paper Puerto Rico's history as one of colonial oppression and a struggle for national self-definition is described. The divergent conceptions of patriotism, national liberation, and human freedom as voiced by leaders of the national elite and of the Puerto Rican working class are discussed in terms of traditional themes in the culture. Attention is then turned to the related opposition of these two classes' understanding of migration and its impact on national cohesion and identity. Finally, the cultural expression of Puerto Ricans in the United States is interpreted and contrasted with official policies and institutions developed under the Commonwealth to explain and orient the emigrant community. It is concluded that today's Puerto Rican workers, who are "grappling to lend contours to a collective identity that has been battered and twisted by colonialism," have many lessons to learn from their working class forebears in the United States and Puerto Rico. (Author/WI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

NATIONAL CULTURE AND MIGRATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PUERTO RICAN WORKING CLASS 1

Ricardo Campos - History Task Force
Juan Flores - Culture Task Force

Copyright ©, RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, 1978

APRENDER A LUCHAR

LUCHAR ES APRENDER

CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS PUERTORRIQUENOS 445 W. 59th St.; New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel.: (212) 489-5260

I

> Who built the seven gates of Thebes?
> The books are filled with names of kings.
> Was it kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone?
> -Brecht; "A Worker Reads History"

Going on 500 years now, the history of Puerto Rico has been the history of colonial oppression. Ever since the landing of Christopher Columbus and the heralded exploits of Ponce de León, the Caribbean island has been in the direct political grip of foreign empires -- for four centuries that of Spain, and since 1898, with the sunset of European colonialism, that of United States imperialism. This background of uninterrupted colonial bondage serves to crystallize the search for Puerto Rican national identity. Whatever stands to defy or deny the norms imposed by the reigning colonial power, or acts to transform them beyond obvious recognition, emerges as a definitive and distinctive feature of the national culture. Such, in a broad stroke, is the cherished assumption underlying the many bold and pronounced efforts to differentiate an essentially Puerto Rican experience in the face of prolonged foreign domination.

Such a monolithic view of the opposition between colonizers and colonized, however, has also helped to obscure the subtle shadings of this political and cultural process, since it divorces the struggle for national self-definition from the contradictory dynamic at work within the colonial society itself. At every point in Puerto Rican history, the details of real life reveal a cleavage in interests and motivation between the anti-colonial aspirations of the owning classes and those of the producing majority. Even the late-19th-century calls for national unity against Spain issued by the progressive criollo elite rested on a pretense of social cohesion which their artesan and freedmen compatriots were less and less ready to accept. By the first years of the 20th century, this class division of the national culture became articulate and dramatic in proportion. What is more, because philosophical differences have reference to physical survival and well-being, the antagonism was ultimately irreconcilable.

All references, with original Spanish text of quotes, appear by page at the end of this essay. Unless otherwise indicated, translations in the text are our own.

The following pages are intended as an introductory discussion of some of the most prominent aspects of this rapidly altered cultural context. The point of departure is the sharply diverging conception of patriotism, national liberation and human freedom which were being voiced by leaders of the national elite and of the Puerto Rican working class, an ideological discordance bearing directly on central themes in the tradition of the national culture. In the second part, attention is turned to the related opposition in these two classes' understanding of migration and its impact on national cohesion and identity. The third part is an interpretation of the cultural expression of Puerto Ricans in the United States as it contrasts with official policies and institutions developed under the Commonwealth to explain and orient this growing emigrant community.

In 1905, there occurred the largest and most militant agricultural strike in Puerto Rican history until that time. In the same year, delegates representing the newly-formed workers' organizations -- the Federación Libre de Trabajadores and the Partido Obrero Socialista -- presented a set of 170 reform proposals and resolutions, aimed at improving the conditions of the Puerto Rican working class, to the session of the Legislative Chamber. One of these demands, known as House Bill 14, called for a limit to the load a worker should be expected to carry on his shoulders. It seems that dock-workers and braceros in all fields of production were being forced to carry 300-pound cargo, or twice their own bodily weight, as this was the standard packaging volume for export produce.

The legislature, of course, was controlled by the governing Unionista Party, which represented the national interests of the Puerto Rican landowners and budding bourgeoisie. These interests were threatened not only by the organized workers, whose demands had to be continually tabled or watered down, but by the United States Congress, which maintained ultimate veto power over any and all local legislation. Because of the tenuous position of the class they represented, the Unionistas were typically obliged to sacrifice the life-blood of the Puerto Rican workers in their desperate scramble for a niche in the mammoth imperialist market.

House Bill 14, hardly an unreasonable request to save the straining backs of the Puerto Rican bracero, met just such a fate. Its most vocal opponent in the Legislature was the majority speaker, none other than the famed orator and poet, José de Diego. It is of some interest to recount the impassioned argument of José de Diego, who is still revered in recent, progressive histories of Puerto Rico as the spiritual father of the independentista movement against United States imperialism. Dismissing the proposal as more appropriate to labor organizations than to national legislation, de Diego went on to reflect on the philosophical nature of human labor: "I believe that a man's work ought not be regulated, as this is contingent to the freedom of contract. A man can work and bear on his shoulders the weight that he can sustain according to his physical constitution and energy. Besides, he continued, betraying his most heart-felt class concern, " to institute a law of this kind would be tantamount to forcing our commercial enterprises and factories to pack their goods according to a specified amount of weight, which would of course be unrealizable." His consoling advice to the working man, in promising to help him attain to a "brilliant future," is that he "should not expect everything from the State. He can and ought manage to raise himself up by his own force and, if need be, make the climb with one, two or three hundred-weights until, like Sisyphus, he reaches the heights of the rock. In Germany, in England and in the United States workers have labored for their own dignity, and have created respectable organizations with the aid of nothing but their own initiative and their own honest efforts."

The response of the working class to the illustrious poet-patriot José de Diego was presented by their elected spokesman, Ramón Romero Rosa. Denouncing

the "horrible crime " at which House Bill 14 was directed, Romero Rosa reminded the delegates of the miserable, anemic physical condition of the Puerto Rican peasantry, and of the widespread illiteracy which prevents the majority of the population from participating in political life, including the workers' organizations themselves. "As they are denied all the benefits of education, deprived of bread for their stomach and of bread for their minds, I understood that we, as representatives of the Puerto Rican people, should come to their rescue by seeing to their assistance." Romero Rosa agrees that "misery has always existed. But the misery of ancient times was attributable to the natural order, while that of today is artificial, and fostered by over-production of a mechanized economy." As political representatives of the society,""we who never stop talking of our Puerto Rican homeland are obliged to take action in favor of the deprived class."

In mentioning the word patria, Romero Rosa was striking at the heart of José de Diego's most sacred historical mission. "If we want to build a patria," he concluded, "let us apply all our intelligence and our utmost powers to elevate the hard-working peasant class so that the Puerto Rican patria begins to have meaning for them. Let us see to the benefit of the peasant class so that tomorrow we may say that we have built a worthy, honest, intelligent and industrious patria."

José de Diego belongs to the pantheon of Puerto Rican intellectual heroes. The esteem in which he was held by the national and international elite was boundless, as is reflected in the many important oficial positions he held:for years he was president of the Chamber of Delegates, the Ateneo Puertorriqueño, the

Association of Writers and Artists, the Unión Antillana and the Latin American Association of Puerto Rico; he held the chair of the University Institute for Roman Law founded in his name; he was associated with the Antillean Academy of Language, the Institute for Social Reforms of Puerto Rico, the Royal Hispanoamerican Academy of Science and the Arts of Cádiz; and was Member of Honor of the Universal Cervantes League, the Ibero-American Union, the Center for Hispanoamerican Culture, the International Academy of History, and the Latin American Association of Paris. Sporting his authorized pseudonyms, the "Caballero de la Raza" ("Knight of the Race"), the "León Americano" ("American Lion"), he won general acclaim as the national poet of Puerto Rico. Many of his poems, which uphold the classical 19th-century heritage while drawing cautiously on the linguistic and rhythmic innovations of Latin American modernista poetry, entered smoothly into the treasury of Puerto Rican verse. Since his death in 1918, he has enjoyed sustained and unwavering appreciation from the full spectrum of cultural and political opinion on the Island.

None of the many homages to his impressive spiritual achievements, however, such as Concha Meléndez' José de Diego en mi memoria, account for his long-standing career as principal attorney for the infamous Guánica Central, the largest sugar refinery in Puerto Rico and the cardinal exploiter of the Puerto Rican working class. In such a capacity, and because of the stances he assumed in the government, he was singled out as the butt of attack by the workers and their spokesmen. Despite his lengthy apologetic discourse to parliament on "Cuestiones obreras" (1913), his blocking of House Bill 14 and countless other such demands proves that he carried the obligations of his legal profession directly into political chambers. For the workers, his poetic and philosophical eloquence was but a thin veil camouflaging his very interested defense of the hacendado class.

De Diego's ardent patriotism and clamor for national sovereignty relegated the democratic aspirations of the working majority, and were often pronounced at their expense. His ideal of political liberty, centered as it was on a defense of ethnic and cultural integrity and of the Castillian language, was hopelessly spiritualized and detached from the most pressing social realities of his time. What is more, it was equivocal and opportunist at key moments, as in his call for postponing discussion of the proposed national plebiscite on political status in deference to the United States cause in World War I. It is worth reconsidering the anti-imperialist renown of a figure like De Diego, who could speak in these terms before a jubilant Puerto Rican legislature in 1917:

> We are citizens of the United States, we live and twenty thousand of our soldiers will fight and die under its glorious flag.... We should wait until Puerto Rican blood brightens the splendor of the flag of the United States, so that our spilled blood enriches our right and speaks for us to the American people in those jubilant and triumphant days of world peace.

Even his renowned Hispanophile disdain for United States cultural aggression was tempered by what seemed an intrinsic awe before the prowess of North American expansion; the same timely speech began with a torrent of praise for the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race.

De Diego was not without adversaries among the contemporary political elite. Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, for example, gave him a quite different nickname -- the Latin-babbling "Tijelino" -- in his satirical dialogues on events in parliament. Matienzo Cintrón's break with the Unión and founding of the

Independencia Party in 1912, along with the forthright socialist lawyer for the Federación Libre, Rafael López Landrón, represented a rejection of the colonial politics styled by De Diego and Muñoz Rivera. López Landrón's lengthy treatise of 1907, Los Ideales Socialistas, still buried in the archives of working-class publications, constitutes one of the most important statements on social theory in Puerto Rican intellectual history. On every count, it stands as a diametrical antithesis to the outlook of José de Diego.

But the most thorough, antagonistic opposition to de Diego were the working-class leaders themselves. Ramón Romero Rosa was a worker, a typesetter by trade; under the pseudonym R. de Romeral, he was a prolific writer and outspoken organizer of the workers for the ten years until his death in 1907. As early as 1899 he authored a powerful manifesto entitled (Socialismo y politica) which circulated widely in the working-class movement. There he proclaimed himself a "revolutionary socialist," and stated: "I shall forever uphold with utmost zeal the sacred axiom of the immortal Karl Marx:'The emancipation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves'." Among his many journalistic articles and dramatic pamphlets of the following years, he also contributed his significant essay La cuestión social y Puerto Rico, in which he applied the major currents of socialist thought to the immediate and long-term problems facing the colonial society.

For the working-class intellectual like Romero Rosa, love of one's home country and the fight for its freedom from the colonial yoke take on practical meaning only when viewed as part of the worldwide struggle for the liberation

of human labor from capitalist exploitation. In eloquent tones worthy of de Diego's finest lyrics, Romero Rosa proclaimed in 1899:

> I shall never be a regionalist in the sense of believing that this beautiful piece of earth is my unique and exclusive center of life, even though I bear within my soul profound feelings of love and endearment for Puerto Rico, and a world of poetry which could resound like a holocaust for all its natural splendors. With fullest conviction I say that wherever man moves his arms in fruitful productive labor, and enjoys the rewards and pride of consuming his flesh in carrying out his daily chores - there, I say, is his homeland, his honor and his life....

Romero Rosa's iconoclastic patriotism did have its forebears in Puerto Rican culture, most notably in the figure of another revolutionary tipógrafo, "Pachín" Marín. The memorable poems of "Pachín" Marín were a biting, ironic retraction of the mystical patriotic visions of the romantic 19th-century poets like José Gautier Benítez, whom de Diego repreatedly acknowledged as his dearest spiritual predecessor. In fact, "Pachín" Marín's famous sonnet "El Trapo" -- in which the very rhythmic structure of the poem goes to show how any scrap of old rag can serve as a national flag as long as it is used in the fight for freedom -- seems to anticipate, critically, the stanza of de Diego's catechismic "Bandera antillana":

> La santa bandera de Borinquen tiene el ojo de Dios,/en el triángulo eterno, que mira/y enciende y azula el espacio de una creación.../ y sus listas rojas son caminos de ardientes anhelos/y las blancas, caminos de llanto y dolor.....
>
> (The holy flag of Borinquen has an eye of God, within an/eternal triangle, which watches and inflames and gives blue tones to the space of a creation..../and its red stripes are paths of ardent yearning/and its white stripes paths of weaping and pain....)

The very life-struggle of "Pachín" Marín, who was present among the Puerto Rican and Cuban revolutionaries in authorizing the Puerto Rican flag and who died in the midst of military battle in Cuba in 1895, is a standing refutation of

de Diego's ethereal concept of Antillean unity as expressed in the same poem:

> De un daltonismo el misterio simbólico subvierte el color
> y la lejanía Cuba y Puerto Rico
> tienen una sola bandera en las dos....
> ¡La unidad perpetua del Dios de la vida!
> ¡La unidad fecunda del Dios del amor!
>
> (As though by daltonism the symbolic mystery subverts the color
> and the distance; Cuba and Puerto Rico
> have a single flag made into two....
> Perpetual unity of the God of life!
> Fertile unity of the God of love!)

Within a few years of "Pachín" Marín's death, the organized working-class movement provided the social foundation for his scathing, political critique. Romero Rosa and his fellow socialists recognized that religious, symbolical patriotism in the manner of Gautier Benítez and José de Diego constitutes an essential ideological pillar to maintain the economic and political servitude of the workers. Romero Rosa warned explicitly that "the worker should not be a patriot in the mystical sense of the word nor allow himself to be swayed by the fanaticism involved in all religion." Religions, he went on, are invented by the ruling classes "to fill the minds of the unhappy producers with fantasies and dreams of artificial paradises, and to prepare them for submission, docility and blind obedience so that they will not rebel against the injustices of the owners and their governments." Likewise, the complementary ideology of narrow patriotism, "from the moment that it is introduced to the worker, begins to engender in him hatred for other races and nations in order to blunt his longing for universal brotherhood and world peace."

The early socialist leaders of the Puerto Rican working class were alarmed neither at the religious nationalism of a figure like de Diego nor at its practical manifestation in the polemic over House Bill 14. Nor, in fact, were they particularly hopeful or intent to persuade the political elite otherwise.

Their main objective was to expose the propagandistic interests behind official politics and culture, and to win the working-class majority of Puerto Rico away from the retarding ideological influence of their class enemy. The authority of this influence was seductive and pervasive, voiced as it was in commanding rhetoric and resting on age-old customs of dominance and acceptance. The most challenging task of the class-conscious workers was to subvert the sanctified cultural symbols of national cohesion, many of which the popular masses have come to perceive and cherish as their own.

One of Ramón Romero Rosa's staunchest comrades, another prolific Puerto Rican intellectual condemned to historical oblivion, was a worker named Eduardo Conde. Also involved in labor organizing efforts since the late 1890s, Conde was a merchant marine, a house painter, a favorite "reader" in the cigar factories, and a long-time correspondent for the main working-class newspaper, Unión Obrera. He outlived Romero Rosa, took part in the founding of the Partido Socialista in 1915 and published his forceful polemical essay, Acusación y Protesta, in 1919. On January 8, 1905, two days after the Epiphany (el día de Reyes), Conde printed a short discourse in Unión Obrera entitled "Los Reyes Magos."

There is, it may be assumed, no need to emphasize the importance of "los Reyes" as an annual holiday observed for centuries by all Puerto Ricans, and by all countries in the domain of Spanish Catholicism. As is known, an entire cultural repertory surrounds the beneficent yearly visit of the three Wise Men, and especially in colonial

countries like Puerto Rico came to represent the holy conjunction of clerical and secular royalty and magnanimous authority. January 6, like December 25 in Protestant societies, is the time to unveil all the binding myths of expectation and reward, to rekindle the songs and rituals of generalized sacrifice and gratitude.

It hardly seems any more necessary to evoke what was to become of this sanctified custom in the hands of a revolutionary Puerto Rican worker like Eduardo Conde writing in 1905. What hypocrisy, what a vicious delusion, his message reads, to perpetuate this fantasy that all children are rewarded according to the hospitality they show the weary sacred travellers!

> All the children of rich parents have to do is put a tiny little box (or none at all) with a few blades of grass on their balcony or under their beds and the next day they find the floor covered with toys and goodies. But poor children, really poor children who walk around without any clothes or without shoes on their feet, who have nothing to eat, and sleep on the hard ground in hallways or on park benches, children who are abandoned by their parents because they can't afford to feed them -- oh yes, children can leave all the boxes of hay they want and they won't find a dammed thing because the Three Kings don't pass through hallways or alleys, they wander _On High_, they pass along the rooftops and leave gifts for the sons of the wealthy, to children who in two minutes destroy a toy that cost ten dollars, ten dollars that could buy food and clothing for ten children who need it because they don't have any.

Eduardo Conde goes on to explain why this is so, why this festival of happiness and generosity brings so much sadness to poor mothers, fathers and children -- and he warns:

> Because the miserable worker is exploited by the boss in an abusive and cruel way; because what is wasted on luxuries today will make it impossible to attend to the just needs of the poor children; because those who have their cupboards full of food need it in order to extract 500 per cent according to their calculations.....

Charity and philanthropy in this kind of society, Conde remarks in the same biting tones, does not extend to the hallways and the streets, because there the children are filthy and sickly, and might contaminate any benevolent sharer from among the more fortunate and blessed. And, of course, it is all the poor peoples' fault, since everyone knows they throw away their money on useless work and at all the parties they have all year long. "Mankind," he concludes, "is made that way" ("porque...la humanidad está así constituida").

But the most interesting device used by Conde in this sardonic outburst of working-class logic is his framing of the exposure with references to a popular song dedicated to the visit of the Three Kings. He begins by quoting, in the form of a motto, the opening lines of the well-known "canto popular": "Now the kings are leaving,/Blessed be to God..." ("Ya se van los reyes/Bendito sea Dios..."). At the end of his bitter tirade, he repeats the same folkloric motto, providing this time the third verse -- which contains the promise of the Kings' return year after year -- and subjecting it to the rigor of his class analysis:

> The rich children, they may well sing:
>
> "Now the Kings are leaving,
> Blessed be to God,
> They're gone and they'll be back"....
>
> Yes, they'll be back, because they love you so much,
> they'll be back to bring you more and more whistles
> drums and little cars to play with.
> Poor children, too, will sing:
> "Now, the Kings are leaving..."
> They're gone, yes, and here's hoping they'll never be
> back again!

In this way, Eduardo Conde has managed to carry his demystification of reactionary religious traditions to the level of their familiar expression in the hearts of the popular classes. He confronts the workers and peasants with their own spontaneous and internalized complicity in the very mythology which serves to perpetuate their social oppression.

Ramón Romero Rosa's direct and indirect political confrontation with the outlook of José de Diego and Eduardo Conde's sarcastic subversion of popular customs represent parallel events in the same historical process. The emergence of proletarian consciousness introduces a qualitatively new content to what seemed a harmoniously cohesive national culture; it brings into play a new world-view which stands in radical antagonism to both the treasured ideals of the educated elite and the fatalistic folklore of the servile masses. This momentous event constitutes the crossroad in the cultural history of any people, and in this respect Puerto Rico is obviously no exception.

The turn of the century, then,marks the time when Puerto Rican workers, despite their anarchist and utopian socialist upbringing, first express political consciousness of themselves as a social class. From that point on, every theme and issue in Puerto Rican life assume two main contradictory fields of response, and every cultural activity or product occurs within one of two conflicting contexts of development. This is not to say that working class culture should, or can, be understood in and of itself, in isolation from the still dominant, official culture representative of the bourgeoisie. The danger of such an approach is serious, as is most evident in relation to the unfolding of artistic forms and styles, which for stretches of working-class

history will inevitably be drawn from the stock of familiar expressive modes long used by the ruling classes and absorbed by the popular masses subjected to them. The content, too, of the new proletarian perspective gained important bearings from the democratic ideals of the bourgeoisie in its progressive period of ascendancy; one of the workers' favorite hymns was entitled "La Marsellesa," and their recurrent slogan was "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity." Within Puerto Rican traditions, these are the ideological threads that link the revolutionary criollo struggle against Spain with the nascent expressions of the organized Puerto Rican working class.

The point is, rather, that since that crucial juncture was reached, Puerto Rican "national culture" has been made up of the intense dynamic of two distinctive though constantly interacting cultures, each of which voices the national and international perspective of a specific class and each exhibiting its own set of compelling internal contradictions. Over any given span of time, the "national culture" as a whole expresses the relative strength of these two classes, relative to each other in the national setting and to their economic and political counterparts internationally.

II

> For we went, changing our country more often than our shoes,
> In the class war, despairing
> When there was only injustice and no resistance.
> -Brecht, "To Posterity"

On March 21, 1915, in the town of Cayey, hundreds of Puerto Rican workers came together to found the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. The keynote message of that historic convention was delivered by the newly elected Secretary General and long-time leader of the Federación Libre de Trabajadores, Manuel F. Rojas. "Economic independence," Rojas said, "cannot be won through the economic struggle alone. As long as the capitalist can secure power which derives from the people, and can convert it into an adulterated, concocted law of which capitalism is the only beneficiary, it will not be possible, comrades, to think of economic independence without laws to guarantee its implementation....Here, at this first convention of the party we represent, we must resolve to unite all the forces of the people to struggle for the social, economic and political emancipation of the people themselves." Within two years, in the elections of 1917, the young party gained control in seven municipalities, had two representatives elected to the legislature, and won 14 per cent of the popular vote. To accompany these local successes, Puerto Rican workers from all over the Island were composing hymns of praise to the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution.

One of the delegates to the founding convention in 1915 was a young tabaquero who was born and grew up right there in Cayey: Bernardo Vega. Bernardo was filled with enthusiasm at the birth of the new party, and influenced deeply by the many inspired working-class leaders who gathered in his hometown. But he was not to continue his organizing activities in Cayey, nor to enjoy directly the first fruits of the party's political campaigns. In August, 1916, Bernardo Vega left Cayey and Puerto Rico behind him, taking the course of migration to New York City in which he would be followed by so many of his countrymen in the fifty years that ensued.

Bernardo recounts his departure and voyage to the United States in the opening chapter of his memoirs -- Memorias de Bernardo Vega -- which were edited and published by César Andreu Iglesias in 1975. This book, written during the late 1940s but not to see the light of day until ten years after the author's death, stimulates a radical rethinking of the entire course of Puerto Rican history, and particularly the momentous migratory experience of the Puerto Rican working class. Now behing Bernardo's seemingly voluntary decision to leave his beloved home town and homeland were the pressures of economic necessity and the dictates of imperialist planning policies that propelled entire contingents of his proletarian compatriots into waves of migratory motion. In the course of his narrative, he clearly identifies his emigration and decades of tribulation in New York as illustrative of a collective national and class reality. The opening pages of his memoirs, entitled "From his little town of Cayey to San Juan and how Bernardo arrived in New York without a watch" ("De su pueblito de Cayey a San Juan y de como Bernardo llegó a Nueva York sin reloj"), are a symbolical representation of the migration of half the Puerto Rican working class to the United States in the 20th century.

To appreciate fully the artistic quality of this first chapter, and the immense historical value of the entire book, it is important to bear in mind the ambiguities of a bourgeois understanding of the same emigration process. In 1914, the Governor of Puerto Rico Arthur F. Yager submitted to the President and War Department of the United States a proposal advocating the planned emigration of Puerto Ricans as a solution to the pressing social problems on the Island, stemming -- in the Governor's view -- from rampant unemployment and acute "overpopulation." This proposal, which was eventually accepted and implemented many more times in the following decades, inspired a clamorous and conflicting response among the Puerto Rican elite. The owning class itself was sharply divided on the issue basically between those who threw their lot directly with the interests of the imperialists and the "national" hacendados, who sensed a need on their own part to retain a ready labor reserve. It was the latter sector which took the most vocal stand, and the argument behind their opposition, with all its equivocation, provides the dominant bourgeois perspective for years to come. Their most articulate spokesman was, once again, José de Diego.

De Diego expressed his indignant reaction to Governor Yager's proposal in an eloquent, short essay, "El Desplazamiento" ("Displacement," 1914). The patriotic poet is outraged at the very idea, which he considers beneath the dignity of any "civilized government," of "impelling emigration, of negotiating the emigration of Puerto Ricans" like any other business deal. To legislate such a process by treaty, contract or policy is for him unheard of "in the history of international law and in the history of colonization, even under the cruel system of the ancient Asiatic conquerors!" For an educated

intellectual and renowned political lawyer, de Diego gives evidence of historical memory even here. But to come his main argument: he is worried about the miserable condition of the Puerto Rican workers, and intransigent over the cruel inhumanity of the prospect of transporting people like cargo or cattle. He places the blame for the existence of an unsupportable population excess and an abysmal standard of living squarely on the imperialists; he implies, at least, that independence is the only long-term solution.

Such is the surface level of de Diego's anti-imperialist fury. The undercurrent of his rationale runs much deeper. The most disastrous consequence of "negotiated" emigration, for him, is that it would "destroy the density of our population, the wall which resists the destruction of our personality and our race." "Displacement," he exclaims, "displacement in all forms, up to and including that brand-new version of diplomatic arrangement with foreign countries: displacement of Puerto Rican citizens for North Americans, of the Castillian language for English, of jíbaros by Yankees." At such a thought, de Diego is swept into the realm of sheer fantasy: "Couldn't they just as well displace our geographical latitude, our entire Island, with its mountains, plains, rivers and trees, carry us with the wind to another location less persecuted by cyclones and colonial governments?"

De Diego found the scheme put forth by Governor Yager so scandalous that he did not seriously believe it could be put into effect, or so he says. But if it should, he warns his countrymen, "no Puerto Rican should leave Puerto Rico, no patriot should abandon his Patria, so that his place be taken

by an invader. Everyone should stay here, right here ("aquí adentro"), firm, locked in by hunger and protest but not denying our mother land our resistance in life and our bones in death!"

Now, as mentioned, José de Diego acted on many fronts as a representative of the class interests of the "national" criollo bourgeoisie, that sector which opposed large-scale emigration because it threatened to drain the country of the labor reserve they needed to maintain their largely seasonal, servile relations of production. Be it recalled that in Parliament de Diego took a stand not only against House Bill 14, but against the eight-hour working day, a minimum wage law and wage payment in hard currency as well. As Eduardo Conde repeatedly reminded his fellow workers, it was de Diego who said, "The worker should earn what is needed for his subsistence, and nothing more." In his rhetorical essay "El Desplazamiento," de Diego is providing the imaginative, philosophical expression of this basic economic position. His fears for the unity of the nation and the purity of the race and culture, as humanitarian and anti-colonial as they may sound, stem from definite class motivation. Most transparently, his call for patriotic resistance to cultural aggression and planned emigration is singularly symbolical and blatantly disdainful of the real needs of the Puerto Rican masses.

Nor was de Diego consistent in his repugnance for the North Americans and glorification of the Puerto Rican -- or, rather, "Hispanic"-race. By 1917, all sectors of the colonial bourgeoisie coalesced in support of the United States war effort, and the independentista elite postponed their calls for a plebiscite on the issue of national status. On November 6 of that year,

to the thunderous applause of his fellow politicians, President of the House de Diego spoke of the North American "race" in very different terms. Based on his readings of Italian anthropological literature, and especially Cesare Lombroso's book L'Uomo Delinquente, the national poet discovered "in the North American type the superman of the modern age, with his extended neck, long legs, broad chest, physiologically provided with the strongest arms for facing up to the struggle for survival, and psychologically gifted with an aggressive, tenacious will to undertake the struggle for progress." Penetrating even more deeply, he came to recognize the lofty moral values of people of the United States, "descendant as they are from one of the superior races of Europe, and fortified by cross-breeding with other races of analogous origin, situated in a colossal portion of the World, and reaping the prolific gifts of the soil, subsoil and skies." With this new, "scientific" understanding, his admiration and sympathy could only grow, as did his faith in the eminent justice which awaits the Puerto Rican people, " and in the efficacy of our insistent demand for the welfare and freedom of our people."

Despite the self-contradictory, constantly vacillating quality of de Diego's speeches, they all betray the same bourgeois conception of national identity. Throughout, he understood nationality as an essentially ethnic and cultural category, and emigration as the tragic separating of naturally ordained national bonds. Needless to say, one version or other of the same orientation has prevailed among both nationalist and assimilationist tendencies down to the present.

On his way from Cayey to New York, Bernardo Vega made a stop-over in San Juan. There he took occasion to take leave of his comrades from the Partido:

Manuel F. Rojas, Santiago Iglesias, Prudencio Rivera Martínez and Rafael Alonso Torres. "All of them," he recalls, "regretted my decision to leave because of the loss they said it would mean for our nascent workers' movement. But they did not try hard to dissuade me. As socialists, we dig our trenches everywhere in the world." Bernardo, of course, was no typical emigrant:

his departure was in large measure voluntary, and what is more his perspective derived from an uncommonly high level of class consciousness. But, again, this revolutionary standpoint was not removed from the social experience of the mass of workers; rather, it represents the objective, historical strategy of the working class as a whole. Bernardo and his comrades recognized -- perhaps from reading Lenin instead of a pre-fascist demagogue like Lombroso, but most of all from their own practical lives in society -- that a person's "identity" is distinguished not so much by his particular ethnic makeup, but by his historical role in the class struggle, and by the culture of his nation in its struggle for equality and independence.

Not that Bernardo Vega ignores his distinctive physiological traits; on the contrary:

> In those days I was a man of larger stature than was common among Puerto Ricans. I was white, a jíbaro from the mountains, and there was that waxen hue to my face so characteristic of men from the heart of our country. I had a round face with high cheekbones, a wide flat nose, and small blue eyes. As for my lips, well I'd say they were rather sensual, and I had a good set of strong, straight teeth. I had a full head of clear chestnut hair, and in contrast to the roundness of my face I seem to have had square jaws. All in all I felt pretty ugly, though there was never a lack of women that took me for the contrary.

Immediately following this graphic, detailed description, which would seem to lend Bernardo an almost typological jíbaro significance, he goes on to place himself and his physical appearance into the social context where it belongs. This delightful passage is of utmost interest to anyone studying the experience of Puerto Rican "identity" in the multi-national United States setting: 24

> I did not inspire much sympathy at first sight, I'm sure of that. I have never been a man of easy friendship. No doubt my physical appearance had a lot to do with it. I hadn't been living in New York for long before I realized how hard it was for people to tell where I came from. Time and again I was taken for a Polish Jew, or a Tartar, or even a Japanese... God forgive my dear parents for this humanity, which was after all the only thing they handed down to me.

Bernardo's message is clear: the only "race" that really counts is the human race, which is composed of many different nationalities and ethnic groups. The "humanity" inherited by Bernardo from his parents is not merely his relatively indistinguishable human countenance, but his ingrained instinct for human fraternity and equality. It is important to add that Bernardo Vega did not accept his light-skinned jíbaro features as in any way typical or distinctly representative of the Puerto Rican people. He recognized the multi-ethnic composition even of the nation from which he had departed, as his powerful political homage to Arturo Alfonso Schomburgh, a black Puerto Rican, illustrates unequivocally; in his memoirs, he spoke of Schomburgh's accomplishments in the following terms: "He arrived here as an emigrant and has left a rich legacy to our countrymen and to North American Black people: magnificent example of the identity of oppressed peoples!"

The emotional and psychological aspects of the emigration experience also find masterful treatment in these opening pages of his semi-fictional autobiography. Bernardo gets no sleep the night before his departure, his mind swarming with nostalgic fantasies of his beloved Cayey, his friends and family, and of the beautiful hills and rivers of his homeland. As the boat is about to sail, he finds himself up on deck with all the other passengers who are, like himself, soaking in their last glimpse of San Juan. "I did not want to lose a single breath of those final minutes in my country, final for me anyway."

But even in this shared and innocent sentimentality Bernardo finds himself at odds with many of his fellow passengers, and again the distinction refers to a difference in class perspective. For as soon as the boat hit the high seas and began to pitch, most of the passengers headed for their cabins, where some

of them stayed sealed in ("encuevados") for the entire, four-day voyage. "Not I," says Bernardo, "I stayed up on deck until the island was lost from sight in the first shades of nightfall." Upon arriving in New York, two classes of Puerto Ricans disembark: first those travelling first-class, "businessmen, well-to-do families and students. In second-class, which is where I was, there were the emigrants, most of us tabaqueros." Metaphorically, the seasickness which forces the "first-class" passengers to flee to their cabin bunks stands for their insulation from the world outside, their confinement within the narrow comforts of their familiar provincial domain. The revolutionary Puerto Rican worker, it is suggested, does not share this insularismo, an infamous attribute stamped by Antonio Pedreira on the entire national psyche. Rather, his horizons are open to the world; he is anxious and willing to experience other lives , other places.

Much of this revolutionary vision, of course, is imputed to his original experience by a Bernardo Vega looking back from a point much later in life, and after many intervening experiences. But this narrative retrospection must not be considered falsification; it detracts nothing from the validity of his observations. Without that fully legitimate literary device, in fact, the author would be surrendering, rather than gaining, his historical objectivity. During the voyage, for example, Bernardo admits that he shared in the common wish-dreams of his fellow passengers as to their plans and hopes for life in New York. "First savings could go to sending for close family. Later, after a few years, time would come to return home with good means. Whoever it was, sight was set on the farm to be purchased or the little store to be set up in

town....All of us built our own little castle in the sky." The tone of these sentences is ironic; Bernardo knows, in retrospect, that a very different fate awaited those Puerto Rican workers in East Harlem, the South Bronx, and Williamsburg. As a class, and no matter how ardent their patriotic longing, they would not be returning to Puerto Rico, nor would they be scraping together enough savings to do anything but stay alive. Bernardo understands now, when writing his memoirs, if he did not realize then, that he and the other second-class emigrants imagined to be first-class passengers in even dreaming such a future.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of these pages from Bernardo Vega is his treatment of the initial cultural shock of the arriving emigrants. He recalls that all of them seemed overdressed, and curiously out of style.

> I mean, we had on our Sunday best. I myself was dressed in a navy blue cheviot "flus," as they would say back home. I was wearing a borsalino hat made of Italian straw. I had on my black shoes with long, pointy toes. I was sporting a white vest and a red tie. I would have arrived with a dazzling wrist-watch but a travelling companion warned me that it was considered effeminate to wear things like that in New York. So as soon as the city was in sight and the boat got into the harbor, I tossed my watch to the sea... And just to think, it wasn't long before those wrist-watches came into style and ended up taking over the scene. So, I arrived in New York without a watch.

Despite the many variations created, precisely, by changes in styles and times, this little scene rings with familiarity for the many larger and frequent

waves of newly-arrived Puerto Rican immigrants to New York. Anxiety over feeling out-of-place in a foreign habitat, dictated by the ridiculous yet painfully real clash of contrasting norms; the arbitrary and bewildering interplay of transitory tastes and preferences; the affectation and display forced on a people coming onto a scene with unwarranted expectations -- all of these collective cultural traumas have continued to haunt the migrant Puerto Rican workers, and are evoked here in the very stylistic mannerisms of the text. Even the notorious "Latin" masculine instinct comes into play; but Bernardo places this trait in proper historical perspective by confronting it with the even more insidious sexual prejudice of the modern, "liberal" metropolis.

But the anecdote of the discarded wrist-watch carries a larger metaphorical connotation. For unlike the other cultural baggage, this object is not primarily aesthetic, but functional: it tells the wearer the time of day. While still in Puerto Rico, Bernardo was continually locating himself in time. The chapter begins on August 2, 1916 early in the morning; he arrives in San Juan at 10:00 A.M. He spends the next few hours visiting an old teacher, the afternoon with his socialist comrades, and the evening with the heirs of a prestigious Cayey family living in the capital. He passes his sleepless night walking the streets of San Juan and ends up at dawn in the Plaza de Armas, "seated on a bench, looking up now and then at the clock of the City Hall." The tropical sun, the first trolley and the hustle of men and women leaving for work announce his last morning in Puerto Rico. At 2:00 that afternoon he boards the Coamo. From that moment on, aside from the passing of four days at sea, no further indication is given as to the time.

When Bernardo throws his wrist-watch to the sea, it is more than a submission to prevailing cultural prejudices. His arrival in New York "without a watch" represents a loss, or rejection, of temporal bonds, of familiarity, of personal and social bearings. As a loss, it is a disorientation, and implies a sense of helplessness and uprootedness which contrasts abruptly with the solace he had gained from the big clock on the San Juan City Hall, and from the well-known streets and trails of his native Cayey. But as a rejection --and Bernardo does discard the watch of his own choosing -- it means entering a new life with a new time-frame, taking up new habits and engaging in new struggles in a new and different context.

To repeat once again, the fictional and biographical Bernardo Vega was both typical and atypical of Puerto Rican working-class emigrants. Unlike the vast majority of them, he was a revolutionary socialist, and went through the migration experience understanding the economic necessities and political supervision that set it in motion. To this extent, he appears to downplay much of the brutal hardship that emigration has meant for thousands of working-class families over the years. But he was, after all, a worker, with no other commodity but his labor-power, and his book goes on to tell of the abuses and tribulations he shared with the masses of his exiled compatriots. It is socialist class consciousness that makes it possible for him not only to document, but to analyze critically his life as a Puerto Rican worker in New York.

In both capacities -- as a worker and as a revolutionary -- Bernardo Vega exposes with remarkable poetic simplicity the twisted, opportunistic understanding of emigration as exemplified by a bourgeois visionary like

José de Diego. The Memorias dramatize in concrete, gripping form the thesis put forth by Lenin in 1913:

> There can be no doubt that dire poverty alone compels people to abandon their native land, and that the capitalists exploit the immigrant workers in the most shameless manner. But only reactionaries can shut their eyes to the progressive significance of this modern migration of nations. Emancipation from the yoke of capital is impossible without the further development of capitalism, and without the class struggle that is based on it. And it is into this struggle that capitalism is drawing masses of the working people of the whole world, breaking down the musty, fusty habits of local life, breaking down national barriers and prejudices, uniting workers from all countries.....

After he throws his watch to sea, Bernardo's life goes on to new chapters: "trials and tribulations of an emigrant in the Iron Babel on the eve of World War I";"Proletarians lend a hand, but hunger pinches and there is no remedy but to work in a munitious factory";"Customs and traditions of the tabaqueros and how work got done in the cigar factories of New York"; and so forth. Chapters in Bernardo Vega's life, all of them are lessons for the people of Puerto Rico and the United States, and most of all for Puerto Rican people living in the United States.

III.

> Who says I must be sweet soft barefoot
> and helpless, when stepped upon I will
> scream be hard and cold break bottles
> and windows
> Rage with revenge
> --Sandy Esteves, "Who says I can't"

In 1924 a leaflet was circulating in El Barrio. The Alianza Obrera Puertorriqueña, a newly-formed organization of Puerto Rican workers in New York City, was calling upon its membership and all interested compatriots to attend an important meeting that Sunday at the "Hall Socialista" on East 107th Street between Park and Madison. The occasion was a major address on the latest developments in Puerto Rican politics; the speaker Luis Muñoz Marín. "Sensational political declarations," the leaflet read, "will be made by this intelligent young man concerning the manifesto recently issued in Puerto Rico by Mr. Tous Soto and Mr. Antonio Barceló, in our effort to keep the Puerto Rican colony residing in New York abreast of reliable, up-to-date information." The leaflet was signed by Jesús Colón, Secretary of the Alianza, which included among its most active members Bernardo Vega.

It is not certain what "sensational political declarations" the young Muñoz Marín made to his audience of Puerto Rican emigrants about the imminent "alliance" between Puerto Rico's two established parties -- the

"Unionists" and the "Republicans" -- to counteract the growing successes of the Socialist Party. But from earlier statements it can be assumed that he was warning the workers of the treachery of bourgeois parties. At the Socialist Convention of October 6, 1920, Muñoz Marín had spoken out in firm opposition to a proposed electoral pact with the Republicans. "In the name of our country, of Puerto Rico, and of pure criollismo," he pronounced at that time, "I ask that this convention vote unanimously against any unity with the Republicans, which is a bourgeois party, a party of infamy and shamelessness. Its President, after all, is José Tous Soto, who is chief attorney for the Guánica Central, the most powerful corporation in Puerto Rico and one of those that brutally exploits the proletariat of our country." Referring in such terms to José de Diego's professional successor, Muñoz Marín emphasized that it was a "decisive moment in the history of Puerto Rican socialism," and that no one can uphold the principles of socialism and the working-class movement and at the same time sanction a pact "with any bourgeois party in the world." Following the convention, he reaffirmed his position in an interview with El Mundo. He added that although such tactical alliances may have been necessary in the past, and Karl Marx had spoken of them "in his Communist Manifesto," these had only been entered into in "despotic, militarist countries, where the bourgeois party had as much revolutionary fervor as the proletarian party." "I have said many times," he concluded, "that capitalism is like a huge raven, of which the right wing is the Union Party and the left wing the Republican Party. I see no use in uniting with one in order to sever the other."

Muñoz Marín had joined the socialist movement at the end of World War I, upon returning to Puerto Rico from Washington D.C., where his father - Luis Muñoz Rivera - had been Resident Commissioner since 1904. After youthful years of prestige, educational privilege and budding literary recognition, he embraced the cause of freedom and justice for his suffering countrymen. He met Santiago Iglesias and other socialist leaders, and promoted enthusiastically their impressive electoral campaigns. He even tried his poetic hand at proletarian literature: in 1918 he co-authored - with Evaristo Ribera Chevremont and Antonio Coll Vidal - a book of stories, Madre Haraposa (Mother in Rags), which bore the subtitle (Páginas rojas).(Red Pages). Throughout those early years, his vision was filled with the dream of social redemption and proletarian revolution, as in his agitational poem "The Pamphlet":

> The dream that sleeps in breasts stifled by tuberculosis
> (A little air, a little sunshine!);
> the dream that dreams in stomachs strangled by hunger
> (A bit of bread, a bit of white bread!);
> the dream of bare feet
> (Fewer stones on the road, Lord, fewer broken bottles!);
> the dream of calloused hands
> (Moss...clean cambric....things smooth, soft,
> soothing!);
> (Love....Life.....Life!)
> I am the pamphleteer of God,
> God's agitator,
> and I go with the mob of stars and hungry men
> toward the great dawn....

What was to become of Muñoz Marín's staunch political principles and revolutionary dreams is too familiar to require retelling. His countless

coalitions and compromises with bourgeois parties and "New Deal" imperialists came to define the course of Puerto Rican politics for decades and, in many ways, down to the present day. Yet the opportunist maneuvers that culminated in the Popular Democratic Party, Commonwealth Status and Operation Bootstrap were foreshadowed with the entry of Muñoz Marín into the Puerto Rican working-class movement around 1920. The slogan of the Populares -- "Bread, Land and Liberty," in that order -- was but the continuation of a trend within Puerto Rican socialism from its inception -- the trend of economism, of relegation of the issue of national independence to the short-term, bread-and-butter demands of the "popular masses." Among the workers, this position had been a characteristic, and understandable, response to the nationalism of the colonial hacendado capitalists and their spokesmen who did not provide any solutions to the economic problems of the workers. But when linked to the pro-Americanism of Santiago Iglesias, especially in his partnership with Samuel Gompers and the vigilant influence of the A.F. of L., this democratic appeal for economic justice fell easy prey to economism and reformism. The Socialist Party vote of 1919 with Santiago Iglesias, and against the resolution on national independence introduced by Manuel F. Rojas, signalled a major ideological setback for revolutionary socialism in Puerto Rico.

Muñoz Marín could not have successfully engineered this conversion of independent, working-class politics and organization into populist coalitions and reformism without revamping the coordinates of Puerto Rican culture. To this end, he was forced to reinstate the hegemony of the patrimonial heritage. In his many prounouncements over the decades, Muñoz Marín

continually emphasized the situation of Puerto Rico as a "member of the great Western civilization," and its distinctive "personality" and national characteristics as variants and contributions to this binding legacy. The perspectives of indigenous, African and of course working-class expression were treated, when at all, as folkloric remnants and subcultural appendages to this defining strain of Spanish, Occidental culture.

The key, however, to Muñoz Marín's successful cultural policy, was that he framed his Occidentalism in such a way as to incorporate the ultimate harmony of "Latin" and Anglo-American culture. Within this framework, and because of the particular political and geographical context of Puerto Rico, the culture of Puerto Rico became a "bridge," or "frontier," between two cultures. In a major address on "The Puerto Rican Personality in the Free Associated State" held in 1953, Muñoz Marín announced this convenient amalgam of cultural nationalism and colonial assimilation:

> We know that Puerto Rican culture, like that of the United States, is and has to be part of the great tradition of Western culture. But there is no such thing as a Western man who is not a man from some place in the Western world. If we are not Western with Puerto Rican roots, we will be Westerners without roots at all. And the vitality of a people has a great need for roots. We are a Western people in the manner of our own roots. We are Americans of the United States and Americans of America and Westerners of the West. And we are all this as Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rico.

This was an appealing message, to which Puerto Ricans of all classes could rally. Behind its high-sounding internationalist claim, however, was a rationale for disclaiming any historical responsibility for the "surplus" Puerto Rican population who had been turned loose from the nation over the course of planned migration currents.

By 1953, when the first elected Governor of Puerto Rico delivered this speech to the Teachers' Association, nearly a million Puerto Ricans were living in the United States. Muñoz Marín had surprisingly little to say,

in his official, public statements, about this huge exodus of his countrymen, nor of their situation in the United States. He considered migration a natural, rational and beneficial process, as it had the effect of alleviating the seemingly incurable unemployment and over-population on the Island,while providing job opportunities for thousands of working-class families. And he hailed the right which Puerto Ricans share with "citizens from any state in the Union" to move to places where there is more employment; the Puerto Rican migration, for him, was "as normal as the flow of any other citizens" of the United States.

The Puerto Rican living in the United States, it was recognized, brings a different national culture, different "roots," than those prevalent in his new place of residence. "Of people like him," Muñoz Marín was to say, consolingly, "the United States has been built -- people who voluntarily left their homeland, adapting themselves to the culture they found there and contributing to it and enriching it. The Puerto Rican who takes up residence in the United States should adapt himself to his new community, as the Irish, Polish,Italian and Scandinavian people did before him." Culturally, then, if not politically, Puerto Ricans move to the United States not as citizens from any state in the "Union," but as immigrants from a foreign country. Puerto Rican culture, in the new setting, is another ingredient in the pluralist melting-pot.

Such, then, is the official, "establishment" policy toward the cultural situation of Puerto Ricans in the United States. It rests on the

ideological complementarity of assimilationism and cultural nationalism -- assimilation based on the harmonious contribution of the dominant, high culture of the arriving peoples, and nationalism based in the distinctive but assimilable "roots" originating in the spiritual fatherland. In these terms, the cultural position of the Puerto Rican emigrant can preserve two points of reference at once -- the elite cultural patrimony of the Island and mainstream, institutionalized United States culture -- without evoking any real polarity whatsoever. What must go unmentioned, of course, for this paradigm to remain convincing, is the persisting imperialist oppression of Puerto Rico, and the colonial position and the almost entirely working-class composition of the Puerto Rican population in the United States.

One of the most influential transmitters of the cultural trappings put together under the Commonwealth to the setting of Puerto Ricans in the United States has been María Teresa Babín, long-standing professor of Spanish literature and for a short time a chairperson of Puerto Rican Studies at the City University of New York. Among her many activities, associations and writings -- including Introducción a la cultura hispánica (1949), Jornadas literarias (1964), Panorama de la cultura puertorriqueña (1958) and The Puerto Ricans' Spirit (1971)--she edited the only anthology of Puerto Rican literature available in English, Borinquen (1974). The arbitrary selection and organization of that reader -- it contains, in fact, a separate chapter entitled "The Muñoz Dream: Father and Son" -- is matched only by the eclecticism and nostalgic, romantic tenor of the introduction. This criticism is not to deny the value of the anthology in making many historically important texts accessible to English-language readers for the first time, though it does so uncritically and often, it seems, for the wrong reasons.

In her introduction, Professor Babín manages to conjure up the entire mystique

of the "cultural heritage," while carefully circumventing every salient contradiction in the unfolding of the national culture. Fanfares of tribute are paid to the usual monuments, like the founding of the Ateneo and the Institute of Culture, José de Diego's poetic vision and Pedreira's Insularismo, while the trappings of popular folklore and progressive events like the Taino resistance and El Grito de Lares receive their inevitable, passing mention as well.

Even "the Puerto Rican exiles, as we may call the thousands of compatriots living in New York and other places," are represented and discussed in Borinquen. In the writings of Piri Thomas, Pedro Pietri, Victor Hernández Cruz and other examples of the "Neo-Rican modality," the editor finds "a sampling of moving and beautiful things created with pain and sorrow, in a flash of anger as victims of repression and discrimination on foreign soil, witnesses of a system of life and death that has left its Carimbo mark in their flesh and in their souls." Yet she is quick to qualify her praise when contemplating, again, the grandeur of the national tradition:

> Although the literature of Puerto Rico far surpasses that of the Neo-Rican, or self-styled Rican, in the United States, the latter represents a continuity of the island heritage. Since it is so much older and richer, it is naturally more complex and sophisticated. El Barrio or Los Barrios selections, no matter how crude and young, in a cultural sense, have a vitality that demands recognition; for it is a literature in the process of creation, whose forms and goals have already begun to affect those of the Mother Culture on the Island.

Even a cursory reading of a poet like Pedro Pietri, of course, shows how far removed much of the "Neo-Rican modality" is from the lofty cultural ideals of María Teresa Babín and her "Muñoz Dream." Puerto Rican writers

and artists in the United States grew up in homes wracked by poverty and illiteracy; their families for generations back had been victimized by intense capitalist exploitation and national oppression. At their best, their works lash out in fierce rebellion against these inhuman conditions, and burst asunder all the broken promises and artificial idealizations which go to perpetuate them. They draw on and topple myths from both Puerto Rican and United States cultural idioms, and express themselves in English or Spanish, and not uncommonly in rapid switching between the two.

How far from the museums, institutes and academies is that stammer of working-class obedience and frustration which opens "Puerto Rican Obituary":

They worked
They were always on time
They were never late
They never spoke back
when they were insulted
They worked
They never took days off
that were not on the calendar
They never went on strike
without permission
They worked
ten days a week
and were only paid for five
They worked
They worked
They worked
and they died
They died broke
They died owing
They died never knowing
what the front entrance
of the first national city bank looks like

In these poems, Pedro Pietri is totally scornful of every sign and symbol of the "land of opportunity" and has no mind to contribute affirmatively to the cultural "enrichment" of the capitalist United States. In "Broken English Dream" he arrives with his fellow Puerto Rican immigrants: "We follow the sign/that says welcome to america/but keep your hands/ off the property/violators will be electrocuted/follow the garbage truck/ to the welfare department/if you cannot speak english."

And Pietri is just as wary of the familiar old Puerto Rican signs that only convey the same, corrupt message in a different language: "So this is america/where they keep you/busy singing/en mi casa toman bustelo/en mi casa toman bustelo." In "Beware of Signs" he warns of "smiling faces that do not smile/and bill collectors who are well train/ to forget how to habla español/when you fall back on those weekly payments." "What they talk," the poem ends, "no es español/what they talk is allotta BULLSHIT." An even more direct repudiation of elitist cultured nationalism like that of María Teresa Babín may be seen in the paintings and sketches of Jorge Soto. One of these works is an adaptation of the official seal of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture praised by Babín as illustrative of "that balance of ethnic components -- Indian, African and Spaniard --..., the spiritual domain of the 'cosmic race,' proclaimed by the Mexican thinker José Vasconcelos as the epitome of the cultural amalgam in Latin America." The seal, which was conceived at the founding of the Institute

in 1955, actually places the Spanish conquistador in the center, bearing a sacred book and flanked on either side by the naked Taino with armfuls of fruit and the bare-chested slave armed with a very prominent sword. In his sketch, the "Neo-Rican" Jorge Soto illustrates graphically the insidious meaning of this cherished image of Puerto Rican ethnic balance.

These and countless other examples go to show that the most vocal artistic expression of Puerto Ricans in the United Stated did not accept the "Muñoz Dream" or María Teresa Babín's version of "Borinquen," but characteristically unmasked them as still another nightmare of United States imperialism. They have drawn their energy and resources from their own experience, and from other rebellious currents in North American culture -- especially the art of Black people -- rather than from any spiritualized mythology rooted in the Puerto Rican "Mother Culture." To this extent, their outcry represents not a continuity, but a rupture, with the dominant national tradition.

Yet it is important to assess this "Neo-Rican modality" against a real historical backdrop, and in particular its relation to the development of Puerto Rican working-class culture. For despite its origins in proletarian misery, and its forceful protest against abusive conditions, this art rarely suggests any potential revolutionary alternative. Typically, the tone is one of prolonged sarcasm, and the outcome of any emotional movement is existential desperation or individualized brooding. When

Puerto Rico is evoked, it is not as a society with a history of struggle to build on, but as a fantasized paradise having little to do with contemporary reality. Piri Thomas' chapter "Puerto Rican Paradise" from Down These Mean Streets is an example, as is the closing stanza of "Puerto Rican Obituary": "where beautiful people sing/and dance and work together/where the wind is a stranger to miserable weather conditions/.. Aqui you salute your flag first/Aqui there are no dial soap commercials/ Aqui everybody smells good," etc. Even when the homeland is taken to be the streets of El Barrio, and the historical colony is dismissed altogether, the range of possibilities does not include any hint of political class struggle. As Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero put it in their anthology, Nuyorican Poetry (1975): "For the poor New York Puerto Rican there are three survival possibilities. The first is to labor for money and exist in eternal debt. The second is to refuse to trade hours for dollars and to live by your will and 'hustle.' The third possibility is to create alternative behavioral habits." Aside from wage-slavery and lumpen hustling, then, there remains the special role of the prophetic street poet who survives, presumably, by force of his own creative energy.

It would be unfair, of course, to expect the rebellious young Puerto Rican artists in New York to have recognized their continuity with the revolutionary, working-class traditions of Puerto Rican culture, since it is precisely this component of the national history more than any other

which imperialist relations are most urgently obliged to suppress. The Puerto Rican cultural outburst of the 1960s could not possibly have been aware of a Puerto Rico as seen by Ramón Romero Rosa, Luisa Capetillo or Eduardo Conde, nor even of the earlier class struggle of Puerto Ricans in New York as narrated by Bernardo Vega or Jesús Colón. All of these figures, and above all the political and cultural relations they established between the revolutionary movement in the United States and in Puerto Rico, have been cast into oblivion by the subsequent course of history.

And yet, in spite of this disconnection, the closest thematic precedence and standard for New York-based Puerto Rican writing in the last decade were set by books like Memorias de Bernardo Vega and A Puerto Rican in New York by Jesús Colón. Literary expression of the life and struggles of Puerto Ricans in the metropolis, tossed from job to menial job to unemployment and welfare lines, and subject to abuse and discrimination at every turn, did not spring up new-born in the 1960s. The new wave, of course, has had its own authenticity, vitality and diversity, since it responds to rapidly changing contemporary conditions and cultural influences, and is clearly the voice of a second and third-generation presence. But the background to this production, even of the more personal, modulated lyrics of Victor Hernández Cruz and Sandy Esteves, is situated in earlier decades of reflection on the same social experience.

Jesús Colón is one of the few available links of this kind, though there are surely many more still to be unearthed. Like Bernardo Vega, he grew up in Cayey, and emigrated to New York in the late teens. Raised in the culture of the tabaqueros --his book begins with a proud description of the daily "readings" in the hometown cigar factory -- Colón did not cling as tenaciously as did Bernardo to that trade. The best of his sketches, in fact, relate the sordid details of his experience as a bottle-washer in the lower East Side and as a dockworker in Hoboken. Politically, Jesús Colón was one of the founding members, at the age of seventeen, of the first New York Committee of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in 1918. While Secretary of the Alianza Obrera Puertorriqueña in the early 1920s, he was a New York correspondent to the socialist newspaper, La Justicia, published in Puerto Rico. He later joined the Communist Party U.S.A., which in the 1930s and 1940s was no rarity among Puerto Rican workers: in those years, the Party had some of its most active branches in the Spanish-speaking communities of Manhattan and Brooklyn. Colón ran several times for local office as an American Labor Party candidate, and was for many years head of the thirty Spanish-speaking lodges of the International Workers Order. The last twenty years of his life (1955-74), he spent as a regular columnist for The Daily Worker.

As in the case of Bernardo, much of his political attention went to the Spanish-speaking workers in New York, and he remained a steady link to the struggle in Puerto Rico and Latin America. But Jesús Colón devoted

more thinking and writing to his relation, as a Puerto Rican, to North American workers of other nationalities. He wrote in English, about topics like "How to Know the Puerto Ricans" and "The Library Looks at the Puerto Ricans," and some of his most moving and politically instructive pages capture the differing reception of Puerto Ricans by Black and white working-class families. In short, he identified himself as a Puerto Rican and as a worker in their full, dialectical unity: as a Puerto Rican standing for independence from imperialism, and as a worker in the United States fighting for social revolution. The final, title article of A Puerto Rican in New York gives cogent expression to this sense of historical identity:

> Colonialism made me leave Puerto Rico about forty years ago. Colonialism with its concomitants, agricultural slavery, monoculture, absentee ownership and rank human exploitation are making the young Puerto Ricans of today come in floods to the United States, if only for a few months to work in the equally exploited agricultural fields.
>
> For the ones that are here in greater New York--six hundred thousand strong-- let us show them that there are millions of people that are struggling to take the country away from the trusts that exploit Puerto Rico and the United States alike. Yes, that there are millions of persons to whom that phrase I read many years ago -- "We the people"--means what it says, that we are ready to fight for lower prices, more housing, for a progressive people's government and for peace for "We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect union."....
>
> As I see things moving in the whole world, among the broad masses and socialist-minded forces in the United States, and among the Puerto Rican nation, including potential forces within all its political parties, independence for Puerto Rico will come sooner than you think.

It seems a far cry indeed from this revolutionary, internationalist propaganda to the rebellious defiance and ethnic pride of the younger writers. But there are signs that the cultural and political history of the Puerto Rican working class, in the United States and on the Island, may prove an invaluable resource in breaking the ideological impasse in which the "Nuyorican modality" now seems to find itself. Some such indications are evident in the recent poems and skits of Sandy Esteves, the popular songs of Ruben Blades and the dance experiments of Betti García. An even stronger example is the work of a still relatively unknown, Brooklyn-born poet, Louis Reyes Rivera. Generally in the tenor of contemporary Black verse, Reyes Rivera's poems only started appearing in print in 1976, and not in the usual anthologies of journals of Puerto Rican writings: he is founder and editor of Shamal Books, a new publishing effort dedicated to printing and distributing the texts of young, aspiring poets like himself.

Along with personal impressions and love poems, Reyes Rivera has composed some outstanding monologues of sympathy and identification with the working class. Consider, for instance, the stanza from "For Tom and Judy":

My heels click
along quiet hallways
where Tom's son,
Junior,
used to mop and dry.
My heels click
against the corridors
Junior used to mop and dry.
Junior had his wine jug
to wash the splinters
from his mop handle.
Junior used his wine jug
to wash the splinters
from
his mop handle
swinging his mop
picking up nerves --
Junior used his wine jug
to pick up his nerves
and I don't even know
who
he even was.

Another impressive example is the concluding section of the title poem from his only published volume to date, Who Pays the Cost (1977); here he opposes the presumptions of street fashion to the reality of working-class oppresion:

> Who breaks those mine/shaft
> ore deposits day by day
> for a tenth of a slice
> from the whole of a loaf
> that should have been all
> his?
> Who sleeps
> with trenches in the mud
> on an acre of oblivion
> that used to be his mother's
> stream?
> Who plucks the grape
> pulls the peach
> curses callouses inside wine vats
> changing jelly into cream
> so you might yet appear
> to look a little softer
> than the other someone else?
>
> TELL ME THIS:
> How much is the price
> to call yourself
> COOL
> and who pays the cost
> after you got over?

Reyes Rivera has also written poems which more directly reflect on and adapt Puerto Rican historical experience, such as "Marianita" and "Grito de Lares." In all his writings, he expresses an awareness of the role of the poet - or, in his terms, the "cultural worker" -- which is markedly different from that of the "Nuyorican poets." "Too many artists," he says, "ignore the connection between what they have to offer and what the people need....Cultural workers don't have that choice. I have to earn my way into each person's awareness. I can't shoot for the pockets of a producer. I am the janitor of a history who has to work for his due.... We need the worker in order to arm and protect ourselves with strong, sharp images. We have to be clear about our love. And our only choice is to be persistent!"

Much history, then, is left to be recouped. Today's Puerto Rican cultural workers, grappling to lend contours to a collective identity that has been battered and twisted by colonialism, have many lessons to learn from their working-class forebears in the United States and in Puerto Rico. It is this legacy, more than the inflated visions of José de Diego and the pretentious "national heritage" of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, that has long offered a countervailing perspective on the historical position of the Puerto Rican people.

By way of conclusion, it is worth turning again to the pages of Unión Obrera in 1906. On December 10 of that year, another forgotten Puerto Rican workers' leader, Eugenio Sánchez López, contributed an article entitled "Cuestión palpitante". ("The Burning Question") In a few paragraphs, Sánchez López laid to rest the notion that the politicized workers, in opposing the nationalism of the colonial elite, failed to understand the nature of modern imperialism. In calling for an army of labor to match up to the international force of capital, he asked of his fellow-workers:

> Haven't you come to see the professional elements, the bankers, businessmen and industrialists uniting with their counterparts in the Nation? Of course, and these are the same elements who are so intent on redeeming what they call their patrimony, and in so doing feel no need to cling together stubbornly in some kind of debilitating regionalism.

"Even if we should live to see an 'independent republic'," he continued, "it would be naive not to organize ourselves in unity with our comrades from the United States, for with all our political independence we would still be confronted with the American colossus and its even more dreadful trusts." Sánchez López recognized the identity of interests between the

Puerto Rican workers and the working people in the United States. He Understood that not even national independence harbored any inherent guarantee to an improved lot for the great majority of Puerto Rican people. Now, if the analysis of Sánchez López was valid in 1906, when United States imperialism was first setting up shop in the colonial nation, is it not all the more so today, when every aspect of life on the Island is saturated with the earmarks of imperialist control, when the Puerto Rican capitalists are operating in open league with Wall Street and the Pentagon, and when a third of the Puerto Rican population has taken up permanent residence in the United States? "Are we going to deny the undeniable fact," he ended by asking, "that the more abundant our forces, the more effective our resistance? Are we going to be such Quixotes that our lances and shields are no stronger than those of the knight-errant dreaming pathetically of his Dulcinea?"

There are answers, then, to the question of political alliances, and to the even more vexed issue of national and cultural "identity" so integrally bound up with it. What the emergence and evolution of conscious working-class expression shows is that national culture cannot be understood as an essentially psychological, religious, anthropological, biological or ethnic entity, fixed in time and attached ineradicably to a group of people in some monolithic totality. It is in such terms -- or, most often, in one of many permutations of these categories -- that the ruling classes of all nations stamp and circumscribe the "psyche" of those within the national economic unit at their command; "national culture" is defined and fashioned after their historically dominant image and so as to serve their historically

governing interests. The national "soul" which is presumed to reside within each and every member of the nationality, is either immutable or malleable according to the contingencies of the international marketplace, as the very sequence from José de Diego to Antonio Pedreira to Luis Muñoz Marín makes abundantly clear in the case of 20th-century Puerto Rican theory.

Depending on historical circumstances, and where the ideological accent is placed at any given stage, one of two classical bogeys will surface as dominant. One is the "nationalist bogey of assimilation" -- to use Lenin's phrase -- and of "cultural genocide," according to which national culture is treated as an ahistorical archetype capable of some pure, ideal manifestation and therefore chronically threatened by contamination and extermination as a result of contact with other cultures. Characteristically, the idea of "preserving" the culture is invoked in order to camouflage the real effect of isolating and extracting it from its ongoing process of transformation and interaction. Needless to say, no class distinctions are drawn either within the culture under attack, or within that genocidal culture into which it is being assimilated. The other typical position might be called the assimilationist, universalist bogey of "separatism," which would minimize the element of coercion and privilege in the relation between imperialist and colonial cultures and deny the culture of colonial peoples any distinctive lines of historical, national development. This taboo is manifest in Muñoz Marín's vehement condemnation of all signs of practical struggle for national liberation. When referring to the situation of Puerto Ricans in the United States it is epitomized in what has been called the danger of forming an "unassimilated ethnic cyst," that is, the tendency of Puerto Ricans to group together and seal themselves off from the larger society. This resistance to the "mainstream," it is argued, must be overcome as earlier

immigrants came to overcome it, as it "will always be the source of discord and friction."

The alternative outlook of grounding an approach to culture on the dynamic of the class struggle does not deny the need for national liberation from imperialism, nor the direct ramifications of colonial oppression of the Island within United States society. Rather, it asserts as a strategic principle and historical reality that the working class is the only force capable of carrying the anti-colonial struggle through to its completion. Puerto Rican national culture, then, if it is to be viewed as the ascendant culture standing in most radical opposition to that being imposed by imperialism, should correspond largely to the developing cultural manifestation, and "identity," of the working class.

From this vantage-point, the answer to the danger of "assimilation," especially in the United States context, is transformation of the national culture in the direction of unity and equality with the working-class cultures of other nationalities. This kind of "integration" is different, qualitatively, from contribution to the "enrichment of the culture of the (North) American nation," for unlike that bourgeois slogan it is grounded on a recognition of the colonial position of Puerto Rico, and of the national oppression of Puerto Rican people in the United States. Furthermore, it rests on the fundamental class differentation of the cultures of both nations. And the answer to what is feared as "separatism" and "ethnic cysts" is affirmation of the national culture, in all its psychological, spiritual and aesthetic qualities, as the expression of a people's resistance to imperialism. If by imperialism is understood a stage in the history of class exploitation, and national oppression as the form assumed by the class struggle in this

stage, the relation between national identity and class consciousness begins to lose its paradoxical, elusive, mutually restrictive character. Over the course of Puerto Rican history, it is the class division of the national culture as of the turn of the century, and the large-scale emigration of Puerto Ricans to multinational working-class settings in the United States since World War II, which represent the main events underlying the contemporary redefinition of Puerto Rican identity.

References

The present essay is part of an extended collective effort of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (City University of New York) to analyze and define the chancing historical experiences of the Puerto Rican working class, particularly those resulting from migration to the United States. As such, it builds on some of our previous publications and writings:

Ricardo Campos Orta, "Apuntes sobre la expresión cultural obrera en Puerto Rico" (unpublished, 1974).

Portafolio Proletario (1975), a set of 10 silkscreen posters by artists from Taller Boricua in El Barrio showing Puerto Rican working class leaders Luisa Capetillo, Ramón Romero Rosa, Eduardo Conde, Manuel F. Rojas, Juan Vilar, Juana Colón, Bolívar Ochart, Magdaleno González and Santiago Andrades. An accompanying pamphlet was issued collaboratively by the Centro and Taller Boricua.

Taller de Migracion, 1975. (forthcoming as The Migration of Workers: The Puerto Rican Experience, Monthly Review Press).

Taller de Cultura, 1976.

Ricardo Campos and Frank Bonilla, "Industrialization and Migration: Some Effects on the Puerto Rican Working Class," Latin American Perspectives, III, 3 (Summer, 1976), 66-108.

Felix Cortés, Angel Falcón and Juan Flores, "The Cultural Expression of Puerto Ricans in New York: A Theore tical Perspective and Critical Review," ibid., 117-152.

Juan Flores, The Insular Vision: Pedreira's Interpretation of Puerto Rican Culture (Centro Working Papers, 1978).

Page 3 The text of the debate on House Bill 14 is reprinted in Amílcar Tirado Avilés, Las ideas y la acción de Ramón Romero Rosa, obrero Tipógrafo (unpublished Master's thesis, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1976), pp. 174-6. De Diego: "Yo creo que el trabajo en el hombre no debe regularse, pues esto es atentatorio a la libertad de contratación. Un hombre puede trabajar y echar sobre sus hombros la carga que pueda resistir con arreglo a su constitución y energías. Y hacer una ley en ese sentido equivaldría a obligar a las casas mercantiles y factorías a envasar sus articulos o productos con arreglo a una determinada cantidad de peso, cosa que sería irrealisable.....El obrero no debe esperarlo todo del Estado; él puede y debe elevarse por su propio esfuerzo y subir si es necesario con uno, con dos, con tres quintales a cuestas hasta escalar como Sísifo la altura de la roca. En Alemania, en Inglaterra, en los Estados Unidos los obreros han laborado propiamente su dignificación y han logrado hacer asociaciones respetables, sin que hayan concurrido otros factores que sus propias iniciativas y sus honrados esfuerzos."

Page 4 Romero Rosa, ibid.: "...nosotros sabemos que la mayoría de la clase de trabajadores agrícolas permanece en un estado de analfabetismo tal, que casi puede comparársele a la bestia. Negada de todas las luces de la instrucción, escasa del pan del estómago, como cohibida del pan del cerebro, yo entendía que nosotros, representantes del pueblo de Puerto Rico, debíamos acudir en auxilio de ella....Bien es cierto que la miseria ha existido siempre; pero la miseria antigua era de orden natural, promovida por accidentes; la miseria de hoy es de orden artificial, promovida por la sobreproducción del maquinismo....nosotros que a cada instante hablamos a nombre de la patria puertorriqueña, estamos en el deber de acudir a favor de la clase preterida. Si queremos hacer patria, acudamos con nuestra inteligencia y nuestros esfuerzos posibles, a levantar la clase campesina, abeja laboriosa, que por ella empieza la patria puertorriqueña. Acudamos a favor de la clase campesina para que mañana podamos decir, que hemos hecho una patria digna, honrada, inteligente y laboriosa."

Page 5 Concha Meléndez, José de Diego en mi memoria (San Juan: Instituto de cultura puertorriqueña, 1966).
José de Diego, "Cuestiones obreras: Discurso del autor, como presidente de la Cámara de Delegados, en la sesión del 28 de Enero de 1913," Obras completas (San Juan: Instituto de cultura puertorriqueña, 1966),II, pp. 191-214.

Page 6 De Diego, Obras completas, II, pp. 547-8: "Somos ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos, vivimos y veinte mil soldados nuestros irán a pelear y morir bajo su gloriosa bandera....debemos esperar a que la sangre puertorriqueña avive el resplandor de la bandera de los Estados Unidos, para que esa sangre derramada por ella enriquezca de un nuevo título nuestro derecho y hable por nosotros al pueblo americano en los jubilosos días triunfantes de la paz del Mundo, cuando los grandes con la ayuda de los pequeños hayan afirmado sobre bases inconmovibles la libertad de todos los pueblos de la Tierra."
Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, "Alí Biberón , Califa de la Isla de Pasmos, Tigelino su consejero y unos jóvenes turcos," Rosendo Matienzo Cintron: Orientador y guardian de una cultura, ed. Luis M. Diaz Soler (San Juan: Instituto de literatura puertorriqueña, 1960), II, pp. 17-20.

Page 7 See Díaz Solar, "El Partido de la Independencia, experimento que fracasó," ibid., I, pp. 522-547.
Rafael López Landron, "Los Ideales Socialistas," in Santiago Iglesias Gobierno propio...¿Para quién? (San Juan: Federación Libre de Trabajadores, 1907).
Romero Rosa, "La cuestión social y Puerto Rico," in Lucha obrera en Puerto Rico, ed. A. G. Quintero Rivera (Rio Piedras: CEREP, 1971), pp. 16-32. The Romero Rosa manifesto of 1899 was entitled "El Criterio Libre"; the quote reads: "Siempre sostendré con interesado afán el sagrado axioma del inmortal Carlos Marx, que dice: 'La emancipación de los trabajadores, obra ha de ser de los trabajadores mismos."

Page 8 Romero Rosa, ibid.: "Jamás seré regionalista en el sentido de creerme que sea esta hermosa porción de tierra mi único y exclusivo centro de vida, por más que encierro en mi alma profundas impresiones de amor y cariño para Puerto Rico, y un mundo de poesías que entonar en holocausto de su bellezas naturales. Para mi entera convicción, en donde quiera que el hombre mueva los brazos en la fecunda labor productiva, y tenga por galardón y orgullo el destrazar sus carnes en las faenas cotidianas, allí está su patria, su honor y su vida..."
The text of "Pachín" Marín's "El Trapo" reads:

Cuando un pueblo no tiene una bandera,
bandera libre que enarbole ufano,
en pos de su derecho soberano
y el patriotismo, la gentil quimera;

si al timbre faltan de su gloria entera
bríos de combate en contra del tirano,
la altiva dignidad del ciudadano
o el valor instintivo de la fiera;

con fe gigante y singular arrojo
láncese al campo del honor fecundo
tome un lienzo, al azar, pálido o rojo,

y, al teñirlo con sangre el iracundo,
verá cambiarse el mísero despojo
en un trapo que asombre a todo el mundo.

The full text of "Bandera antillana" is in de Diego, Obras completas, I, pp. 343-4.

Page 9 Romero Rosa, "El Criterio Libre": "...el obrero no debe ser patriota en el sentido místico de la expresion ni tampoco dejarse arrastrar por los fanatismos que las religiones envuelven... inventadas por los acaparadores, para...llenar de fantasías y sueños de mentidos paraísos el cerebro de los infelices productores, y prepararlos para la sumisión, la mansedumbre y la obediencia ciega, con el objeto de que nunca puedan rebelarse contra las injusticias de los patronos y los gobiernos y las ingratitudes de los dominadores... desde el instante en que se establece en el obrero la regionalidad, entra a germinar en él los odios de razas y naciones para dejar sin efecto la fraternidad universal y la paz del orbe entero."

Page 11 Eduardo Conde, "Los Reyes Magos," Unión Obrera (8 enero 1905): "Basta que un niño de padres ricos ponga una pequeña cajita (y algunas veces hasta sin ponerla) con muy poca hierba en el balcón o bajo de la cama, para que al siguiente día aparezcan infinidad de regalos y golosinas, pero.... los niños pobres. ¡Ah! los que son muy pobres, los que andan descalzos y desnudos, los que no comen, los que duermen en el duro suelo de un zaguán, a la intemperie en paseos y plazuelas, los que son abandonados por sus mismos padres, porque no pueden mantenerlos, esos, ¡esos! .... ya pueden poner toda la hierba que quieran, que seguramente nada encontrarán porque los Reyes no pasan por los zaguanes, ni por paseos ni plazuelas, ellos caminan por todo lo alto, viajan por las azoteas para dejar los regalos a los hijos de los satisfechos, a los que en dos minutos destrozan un juguete de diez dollars; diez dollars que han podido servir para comprar (aunque pobremente) ropa y calzado para diez niños que necesitan de ello porque no la tienen." "Repuesta terrible tiene eso ¿por qué? Porque el infeliz obrero es explotado por el patrono de una manera abusiva y cruel; porque lo que se gasta en lujo superfino no deja para atender en ese día a esa aspiración justa de los niños pobres; porque los que tienen sus escaparates llenos de chucherías las necesitan para sacar el quiniento por cien según sus cálculos...."

Page 12 Ibid.: "Los niños ricos, bien pueden cantar:
'Ya se van los Reyes
Bendito sea Dios
Ellos van y vuelven'
.....
Sí, que vuelvan, porque ellos os quieren mucho;
que vuelvan para que os traigan más y más pitos,
tambores y carretas.
Los niños pobres también cantarán:
'Ya se van los Reyes....'
.....
Que se vayan, y ¡ojalá no vuelvan más!"

Page 15 Manuel F. Rojas, quoted in Lucha obrera en Puerto Rico, p. 73: "La independencia económica no puede ser obtenida luchando solamente en el campo económico. Mientras el capitalista reciba el poder que dimana del pueblo, convertido en ley, ley adulterada, ley confeccionada en una forma que el capitalismo es el único beneficiado, no es posible camaradas, pensar en la independencia económica sin ley que facilite su consecución...Aquí, en esta primera Convención del partido que representamos, debemos resolver que las fuerzas todas del pueblo se unan para luchar por la emancipación social, económica y política del pueblo mismo."

Page 16 Memorias de Bernardo Vega, ed. César Andreu Iglesias (Rio Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1977).

Page 17 De Diego, "El Desplazamiento," Obras completas, II, pp. 23-26; p. 24: "sin precedentes en ningún gobierno civilizado; y es que alguien ha concebido la idea de impulsar la emigración, de ¡negociar! la emigración de puertorriqueños...¡El desplazamiento, el lanzamiento, la proscripción de los nativos, con carácter oficial, por medio de una ley o de un tratado o de algo que no se ha visto ni oído nunca en el derecho de gentes, en la historia de la colonización ni aun por el sistema cruel de los conquistadores asiáticos!"

Page 18 Ibid., p. 25-6: "¡El desplazamiento! El desplazamiento en toda sus formas, hasta en aquella flamante del arreglo diplomático con países extranjeros: desplazamiento de la ciudadanía puertorriqueña por la norteamericana, del lenguaje castellano por el inglés, de los jíbaros por los yankis.. ¿No se nos podría también desplazar la latitud geográfica, la Isla entera, con montañas, llanuras, ríos, árboles, para largarnos con el viento a otra parte menos perseguida por los ciclones y los gobiernos coloniales?... Ningún puertorriqueño debe irse de Puerto Rico, ningún patriota debe abandonar a su Patria, para que su puesto sea ocupado por un invasor.. ¡todos aquí, aquí adentro, firmes, encerrados por el hambre y la protesta, sin negar a la tierra madre nuestra resistencia en la vida y nuestros huesos en la muerte!"

Page 19 Eduardo Conde, Unión Obrera (5 noviembre 1906): "En lo que a la organización de los obreros se refiere, de Diego dijo en un meeting unionista dado en San Juan: 'Para que los obreros puedan organizarse primero tienen que curarse la anemia... El trabajador debe ganar para su sustento y nada más'."

Page 20 De Diego, Obras completas, II, pp. 534-5: "...hace algunos años me di por entero al examen de la escuela antropológica del derecho penal y recorrí la copiosa literatura de los jurisconsultos y sociólogos italianos en la materia: me sorprendí de que Lombroso, si mal no recuerdo en L'Uomo Delinquente encontrase en el tipo del norteamericano el super hombre de la edad moderna, de cuello prolongado, largas piernas, ancho tórax, fisiológicamente dotado de una voluntad agresiva y tenaz en la lucha por el progreso...estimé aún más altamente el valor moral de los Estados Unidos, de este pueblo oriundo ya de una de las razas superiores de Europa, fortalecido por el cruzamiento con otras razas de análogo origen, situado en una colosal porción del Mundo, ante los prolíficos dones del suelo, del subsuelo y del cielo, ampliáronse así mi admiración y mi simpatía hacia el pueblo americano....porque mi fe también crecía en la justicia que ha de otorgar al pueblo puertorriqueño y la eficacia de la insistencia de nuestra demanda por el bien y la libertad de nuestro pueblo."

Page 21 Memorias de Bernardo Vega, p. 38: "Todos se dolieron de mi decisión de partir, por la pérdida, según dijeron, que significaba para nuestro naciente movimiento obrero, pero no se esforzaron por disuadirme. Como socialistas, nuestra trinchera estaba en cualquier lugar del mundo." Ibid., pp. 37-38: "Era yo para entonces un hombre de estatura mayor que la corriente entre los puertorriqueños. Jíbaro de la montaña, era blanco, y en mi rostro había un matiz de cera, característico de los hombres del corazón de nuestra patria. La cara redonda, de pómulos salientes; la nariz, aventada y chata; los ojos pequeños, de pupilas azules; la boca, pues diré que tenía labios de un cierto aire sensual; buena dentadura, con bien formados dientes. Tenía abundante cabellera de color castaño claro, y en contraste con la redondez de la cara, se me figura que tenía las quijadas cuadradas. En conjunto, me sentía bastante feo, aunque nunca faltaron mujeres que me tuvieron por lo contrario."

Page 22 Ibid. p. 38: "No inspiraba mucha simpatía a primera vista,estoy seguro. No he sido nunca un hombre de fáciles amistades. Sin duda, mi físico ha tenido mucho que ver en esto. A poco de vivir en Nueva York, me di cuenta de lo difícil que se le hacía a la gente adivinar mi procedencia. En infinidad de ocasiones se me tomó por judío polaco, por tártaro, y aún por japonés...¡Dios perdone a mis padres por esta humanidad, que en fin de cuentas fue lo único que me legaron!"

Ibid., p. 244 (about Schomburgh): "Llegó aquí como emigrante y legó una rica obra a nuestros paisanos y a los norteamericanos negros: ¡magnífico ejemplo de identidad de pueblos oprimidos!"

Ibid., p. 40: "No quería perder ni un hálito de los últimos minutos en mi patria, últimos para mi, quizás."

Page 23 Ibid., p. 40: "Yo no. Yo permanecí en cubierta, y estuve allí hasta que se perdió la isla en las primeras sombras de la noche." "Del compartamiento de primera comenzaron a bajar hombres de negocios, familias pudientes y estudiantes. De segunda, en la que yo me encontraba, bajámos los emigrantes, tabaqueros en mayoría." "Con los primeros ahorros, se mandaría a buscar al familiar más cercano. Luego, al cabo de unos años, se regresaría a la patria con buenas economías. Quien más quien menos, tenía vista la finca que compraría o concebido el negocito que montaría en su pueblo... Todos llevábamos nuestro castillito en el aire."

Page 24 Ibid., p. 41:"Todos los recién llegados estábamos muy bien vestidos. Quiero decir, llevábamos nuestro ajuar dominguero. Por mi parte, vestía yo un flus -- como decían en mi pueblo -- de cheviot azul marino. Llevaba sombrero borsalino de pajilla italiana. Calzaba zapatos negros de punto a la vista. Lucía chaleco blanco y corbata roja. Debí haber llegado con un flamante reloj pulsera, pero un compañero de viaje me aseguró que esa prenda la usaban sólo los afeminados en Nueva York. Ya a la vista de la ciudad, cuando el barco penetraba en la bahía, arrojé el reloj al mar....¡Y pensar que poco más tarde esos relojes-pulsera se hicieron moda y acabaron por imponerse! Llegué, pues, a Nueva York sin reloj."

Page 25 Ibid., p. 39: "El alba me sorprendió en la Plaza de Armas, sentado en unos de los bancos, mirando de vez en cuando el reloj del Ayuntamiento."

Page 27 Lenin, "Capitalism and Workers' Immigration," Collected Works (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), XIX, p. 454.
Memorias de Bernardo Vega, chapters II, III, IV: "Experiencias y tribulaciones de un emigrante en la Babel de hierro en vísperas de la primera guerra mundial"; "Los proletarios se tienden la mano, pero el hambre aprieta y no hay más remedio que trabajar en una fábrica de municiones"; "Costumbres y tradiciones de los tabaqueros y cómo se trabajaba en las fábricas de cigarros de Nueva York."

Page 28 In Spanish, the leaflet read: "Gran conferencia a cargo de d. Luis Muñoz Marín...Sensacionales declaraciones políticas serán hechas por este inteligente joven sobre el manifiesto últimamente en Puerto Rico por los señores Tous Soto y Antonio Barceló, en nuestro empeño de no dejar huérfana de información a la colonia puertorriqueña residente en Nueva York...."

Page 29 Muñoz Marín, quoted in El Mundo (7 octubre 1920): "En nombre del país, de Puerto Rico y del criollismo puro, yo pido a la convención que vote unánimamente en contra del pacto con los republicanos, que es también un partido burgués, un partido de ínfima y de desverguenza, ya que figura en el don José Tous Soto, su Presidente, que es abogado de la Guánica Central, la corporación más poderosa de Puerto Rico y una de las que explotan miserablemente el proletariado del pais. Estamos viviendo aquí una hora decisiva en la historia del socialismo puertorriqueño. Todo hombre que se encuentre en este local y que siente cuales son sus ideales socialistas, cuales son sus principios y cual es su base, yo creo que ningún hombre de esta clase puede sancionar un pacto con cualquier partido burgués que haya en el mundo." Muñoz Marín, El Mundo (8 octubre 1920): "Algunos camaradas me han observado que en distintas ocasiones han ocurrido alianzas entre el partido socialista y el partido de orden burgués. A esto contestaba yo que ese ejemplo no se aplica al presente caso, pues aunque alianzas de esa índole las insinuó Marx en su Manifesto Comunista,

y hasta se han efectuado varias veces, siempre ha sido en paises despóticos, militaristas, etc. y en los cuales el partido burgués tenía tantos ardores revolucionarios como el partido proletario. He dicho muchas veces que el capitalismo es un gran cuervo, del cual es el ala derecha el partido unionista y el ala izquierda el partido republicano. No veo ninguna utilidad en unirse a ésta para cortar la otra."

Page 30 L. Muñoz Marín, Evaristo Ribera Chevremont and Antonio Coll Vidal, Madre haraposa: Páginas rojas (San Juan: Cantero, Barros, 1918). Munoz Marín, "The Pamphlet," appears in English translation (no original available) in Borínquen: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Literature, ed. María Teresa Babín and Stan Steiner (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 199.

Page 31 Proceedings of the fourth Convention of the Socialist Party, held in May, 1919, appear in Lucha obrera en Puerto Rico, pp. 73 - 94.

Page 32 Muñoz Marín, "La personalidad puertorriqueña en el Estado Libre Asociado," December 29, 1953: "Sabemos que la cultura puertorriqueña, lo mismo que la de Estados Unidos es y ha de ser parte de la gran cultura occidental. Pero no hay tal cosa como un hombre occidental que no sea hombre de algún sitio de Occidente. Si no somos occidentales con raíces puertorriqueñas, seremos occidentales sin raíces. Y la vitalidad de los pueblos tiene gran necesidad de raíces. Somos gente occidental a la manera de nuestras raíces. Somos americanos de Estados Unidos y americanos de América y occidentales de Occidente. Y lo somos como puertorriqueños de Puerto Rico."

Page 33 Muñoz Marín, "Declaraciones de Gobernador de Puerto Rico ante la Junta de Aeronáutica Civil" (31 enero 1949), Los gobernadores electos de Puerto Rico (Rio Piedras: COSEBI, 1973), I, p. 15: "Y los puertorriqueños tienen tanto derecho como los ciudadanos de cualquier estado de la Unión a poder trasladarse a los sitios donde haya nuevas oportunidades de trabajo."
Muñoz Marín, "Mensaje a la decimoséptima Asemblea Legislativa en su tercera Legislatura Ordinaria" (14 marzo 1951), ibid., p. 198: "De no haber sido por la migración -- con la cual podemos sin embargo contar como normal en el flujo de ciudadanos dentro de la Unión -- el número de desempleados hubiera aumentado en vez de haberse ligeramente reducido..."
Muñoz Marín, "La personalidad puertorriqueña en el Estado Libre Asociado": "De gente como él se hicieron los Estados Unidos. Gente que individualmente se fueron adaptando a la cultura que encontraron allí y contribuyendo a ella y enriqueciéndola. El puertorriqueño que establezca residencia en Estados Unidos debe adaptarse a su nueva comunidad como lo hicieron antes que él irlandeses, polacos, italianos y escandinavos."

Page 35 María Teresa Babín, "Introduction: The Path and the Voice," Borinquen, pp. xi - xxvi.

Page 36 Pedro Pietri, Puerto Rican Obituary (New York: Monthly Review, 1973).

Page 37 Jorge Soto's drawings which refer to the Puerto Rican cultural tradition appear in Taller de cultura: Cuaderno (New York: Centro de estudios puertorriqueños, 1976).

Page 39 Nuyorican Poetry: An Anthology of Words and Feelings, ed. Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero (New York: Morrow, 1975), p. 9.

Page 42 Jesús Colón, A Puerto Rican in New York and Other Sketches (New York: Arno Press, 1975), pp. 201-2.

Page 43 Louis Reyes Rivera, "For Tom and Judy," Poets in Motion, ed. L. Reyes Rivera (New York: Shamal, 1976), pp. 48-52.

Page 44 L. Reyes Rivera, who pays the cost (New York: Shamal, 1977). The poem "Grito de Lares" appears in Sunbury, 5 (1976), pp. 62-68.

Page 45 Eugenio Sánchez López, "Cuestión palpitante," Unión Obrera (10 diciembre 1906): "No alcanzais a ver al elemento profesional, a la Banca, el Comercio y los industriales tratando de unirse y uniéndose a sus iguales en la Nación? Seguramente que sí, y esto no es más que estos elementos interesados en salvar lo que llaman su patrimonio, no han de aferrarse á la torquedad de un regionalismo enervante. Aun cuando viviéramos la vida de 'República independiente' era inocente no poner de acuerdo nuestra organización con los camaradas de América, porque a pesar de nuestra independencia política tendríamos delante de si como una amenaza el Coloso americano, con su Trust más temible aún. Y si por el contrario, económicamente hablando, nuestra suerte o destino industrial es idéntico al del pueblo obrero americano, y aun podemos decir más grave, porque no unimos nuestros destinos a los de aquellos compañeros. ¿Vamos a negar lo innegable, esto es, que á mayor suma de fuerzas más resistencia? ¿Seremos tan Quijotes que nuestra 'lanza' y 'escudo' será más fuerte y mejor que la del soñador de la Dulcinea del Toboso?"

Page 47 Lenin, "The Nationalist Bogey of Assimilation," chapter 3 of "Critical Remarks on the National Question" (1913), Collected Works, XX, pp. 17-51. The term "ethnic cysts" is used by Eugenio Fernández Méndez, "Los puertorriqueños en Nueva York," La identidad y la cultura (San Juan: Instituto de cultura puertorriqueña, 1970), pp. 259-263; p. 263: "Deberá evitarse a todo trance la tendencia marcadísima de los puertorriqueños a formar en Nueva York un quiste étnico inasimilado, que será siempre motivo de discordia y fricciones."